

Graduate and Professional Student Bill of Rights

Arizona State University

Introduction:

This document was designed to be a general guide to inform graduate students of their rights and responsibilities in broad terms. Graduate Students are defined as all graduate, professional, and post-baccalaureate students of Arizona State University. Many of the items contained within are already specified as rights or responsibilities of students in official university literature. Footnotes identifying the previously published University literature that enumerates these rights are not provided since such references would assuredly be incomplete (due to the manifold nature of the documents that describe the University's policies, rules, and bylaws). Thus, an exhaustive survey of these rights and responsibilities in order to identify those that are truly novel has not been undertaken. This document is not intended to apply to undergraduate students. Although many of the rights and responsibilities described herein apply to undergraduates, some do not. A graduate student is an educator and researcher, as well as a student. This tripartite existence, together with the exceptional influence of a faculty advisor or mentor upon the life of a graduate student, would seem to demand a unique set of rights and responsibilities. Thus, ASU graduate students have drafted this document as an attempt to satisfy this desideratum.

This document was also constructed to promote a more productive climate between our faculty, and us, and to define our role in the university as a whole. These are basic rights common to all graduate students. They form a foundation upon which faculty and graduate students can build a genuine intellectual community.

We, the graduate students of ASU, claim the rights enumerated below:

I. Equal Educational Opportunity:

A. Graduate students have a right to equal educational opportunity and to protection against discrimination based on race, color, gender, religion, age, physical disability, sexual orientation, national origin, political ideology, and political activity.

1. The university should provide graduate students fair treatment in all learning endeavors within the institution, including, but not limited to, course assignments, course grades, research activities, access to financial aid, and recommendations for employment.
2. The university should create the conditions and the atmosphere of nondiscrimination, irrespective of a graduate student's political or ideological beliefs and practices.
3. In general, academic merit should guide departmental allocations of financial assistance and recommendations for employment. However, we emphatically support

affirmative action programs and other federal regulations that promote sexual and racial equality.

B. Graduate students have a right to be respected as individuals of merit and as junior colleagues of faculty. Graduate students are to be considered members of a scholarly community, and as such, they have a right to collegial and respectful treatment by faculty members. The graduate student's position must not be exploited in any way by faculty, administration, or staff.

C. Given that graduate students have the same rights and obligations as all citizens, they are free as other citizens to express their views and to participate in the political processes of the academic community and the community at large.

II. Participation in Department or Division Governance:

A. Graduate students have a right to participate in policy decisions that affect the conditions and quality of their academic life. This requires meaningful representation in department/division and program governance.

1. Within each department/division an elected graduate student representative shall be invited to attend regularly scheduled faculty meetings for their respective department/division. Representatives may also be invited to meetings of various department/division committees when appropriate.

2. Within each program an elected graduate student representative shall be present in the decision-making processes relative to their program.

3. Graduate students should have the opportunity annually to evaluate their professors in writing, without fear of retribution.

B. Graduate students have a right to speak as teaching and/or research colleagues in university or college decision-making bodies.

C. Graduate students have a right to representation at the campus, local, state, and national levels in order to advocate and advance the interests of graduate students.

III. Educational Records:

A. Graduate students have a right to the privacy and confidentiality of their educational records.

1. Graduate student files and all other written information possessed by the department/division about graduate students must be treated with confidentiality. Departments/divisions should provide security over access to these materials.

2. Departments/divisions must make provisions for graduate students to see their personal files in accordance with the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.
3. Graduate students have a right to know, upon request, what authorized personnel have access to their file.

B. Graduate students have a right to reasonable confidentiality in their communications with professors.

1. In general, a professor should not discuss a student's performance with other students.
2. Discussion among faculty of a student's performance should be of a professional nature and should be limited to the student's academic performance and fitness as a graduate student. The substance of the communication should be based on a need to know relevant information.

IV. Graduate Studies Program:

A. Graduate students have a right to full disclosure of information about their standing in graduate studies, about financial assistance, and about prospects for employment.

1. The department/division shall provide new and continuing graduate students with information about the general financial aid picture and the prospects for continuation of funding. This should include information on the number and types of financial aid allocations in the department/division for the prior year.
2. The department/division shall adopt policy statements for the allocation of financial aid to graduate students, and these policy statements shall be communicated to new and continuing students. Statements shall explain how to apply for financial aid, the criteria used for granting aid, the deadlines for applications and decision, the "good standing" criteria used for continuation of funding, and the standards that will be applied in decisions concerning curtailment of funds.
3. Scholarships and assistantships for teaching or for research shall carry statements which specify in clear language the period of coverage, the dollar amount, how funds will be paid, and the duties of assistants (including the weekly hours of work and the specific responsibilities to be carried out). Any benefits included in the assistance package should be noted (tax status, tuition remission, medical coverage, etc.). Special or emergency obligations, such as class coverage in the event of illness or other unexpected absence by instructors, shall also be addressed. Provisions for reasonable and timely notice to the graduate student shall be provided.
4. The placement of graduate students shall be the goal of all faculty members, and it is commonly understood that every faculty member will strive to assist placing her/his advisees. In addition, the department/division shall provide graduate students with

information about the job market. The department/division chairperson shall see to it that compiled information concerning jobs will be made available in an easily accessible location and manner. The department/division should retain an accessible, centrally located file of the job vacancies that come to the attention of the department/division and the members of the faculty. It is desirable for the department/division to release annual statements to faculty and graduate students on the placement record of the department/division, and periodic statements during the year about specific vacancies as they become available.

5. The department/division shall provide graduate students with timely notice of their standing in graduate study. Notice of performance in work, courses and preliminary examinations shall be provided in writing in a timely manner. Inadequate performance, such as low grades, incompletes, poor work performance, and poor or failing performance on preliminary examinations shall be mentioned, and constructive support shall be provided soon after their occurrence. Students shall be informed how such performance will affect their standing in the program, especially continuation of financial assistance, and what they must do to correct inadequacies.

B. Graduate Students have a right to sufficient teacher training, ongoing professional support, and formal assessment and evaluation as Teaching Assistants.

C. Graduate students have a right to clear and specific written requirements for achieving an advanced degree.

1. These requirements should be provided to graduate students upon their admission into a graduate program and/or emphasis.
2. No changes in degree requirements should affect students previously accepted into the graduate program and/or emphasis except at their option.
3. Prospective and currently enrolled graduate students have a right to know and should be informed of the “normative time to degree” and “average time to degree” within a specific graduate program and/or emphasis.
4. Prospective and currently enrolled graduate students have a right to know a program’s and/or emphasis’ attrition rate if available and the predominant reasons for lack of program completion except in instances where confidentiality is threatened. Student access to statistical information on graduate programs should not interfere with the privacy rights of other students.

D. Graduate students have a right to a non-biased evaluation of their progress toward achieving an advanced degree. The criteria for evaluation should be clearly understood by the graduate advisor and student.

1. If a graduate student requests an explanation, reasons for unsatisfactory performance on qualifying or comprehensive examinations should be given in writing, in a timely fashion.

E. Graduate students have a right to substantive feedback and regular guidance concerning their academic performance.

1. Graduate students and their thesis/dissertation director should arrive at and maintain a mutually agreeable schedule of evaluative/supervisory conferences.

2. Graduate students must be notified in writing of unsatisfactory performance before any attempt to dismiss them from a graduate program is initiated.

3. Only the dean of the Graduate College can dismiss a student from a graduate program for academic reasons and normally only upon the recommendation of the program. Graduate students have the right to appeal for cause any decision affecting their academic standing as a graduate student. The burden of responsibility rests with the appellant to provide timely, cogent, and convincing written documentation of the facts upon which the appeal is based

F. Graduate students have a right to refuse to perform tasks if those tasks are not closely related to their academic or professional development.

G. Graduate students have a right to review vitae of faculty members within their degree program/departments/division who are qualified/eligible to serve on their graduate committee. These vitae should be made available at the time the students are accepted into their program to aid them in selecting their committee members.

H. Graduate students have a right to appropriate study and lab space.

V. Research Performance:

A. Graduate students have a right to fair and equitable treatment for work performed on faculty-sponsored research.

1. Students shall be given full credit for the work and ideas they bring to faculty-sponsored research projects. Faculty must not represent the work of students as their own.
2. Faculty shall reach clear understandings with graduate students regarding their responsibilities and rights on research projects. There should be open and honest communication about the tasks graduate students are expected to perform, when students shall have access to data for theses and dissertations, and the conditions under which graduate students shall receive joint or sole authorship on publications that emerge from the research.

VI. Complaints and Grievances:

A. Graduate students have a right to file complaints against the university, college, and department/division or members thereof, and to petition for redress of grievances.

1. The department/division shall provide for procedures of due process, by which graduate students can lodge complaints and obtain redress of grievances. Graduate students shall have access to the complaint filing process, which is consistent with department/division and university rules and regulations.

2. Where a graduate student presents reasonable evidence regarding misconduct by a faculty member or probable cause that such misconduct took place, the department/division shall provide a way by which the student can avoid working directly with the faculty member in question.

3. Students should have access to information concerning appeal procedures beyond the department/division, by which graduate students can seek a rehearing of their grievances (when the departmental/divisional procedures have been exhausted).

B. Graduate students have a right to file a grievance with the appropriate state, regional, or national association. If one of these associations acts on the complaint, ultimately it will be necessary to contact the department/division chairperson and the faculty member(s) concerned in order to investigate the case. Efforts will be made to resolve the dispute and protect the student's position within the department/division. In addition, efforts will be made to play a conciliatory and mediational role by the body taking the matter under its purview.

C. Graduate students have a right to organize independently in promotion of their interests as graduate students.

D. Graduate Students have a right to be free from any form of reprisal for activities related to organizing graduate students or promoting the interests thereof.

VII. Employment Equality:

A. Graduate students have a right to work in an environment free of exploitation, intimidation, harassment and discrimination based on characteristics such as gender, race, age, sexual orientation, disability, religious or political beliefs and affiliations.

B. Graduate students have a right to a fair living wage.

C. Graduate students have a right to work under clear, equitable and mutually agreed-upon job descriptions and working conditions.

D. Graduate students have a right to an impartial, just, and mutually agreed-upon set of procedures for the swift resolution of workplace grievances.

E. Graduate students have a right to adequate parental leave and child care benefits.

F. Graduate students have a right to remission of tuition and educational materials, when serving as teaching assistants, research assistants or graduate assistants.

G. Graduate students have a right to bargain collectively.

H. Graduate students have a right to adequate health care that will meet the needs of graduate student employees, their dependents, and their spouses and/or mates, regardless of a formal marriage.

I. Graduate students have a right to work at teaching or research jobs related to the student's field or area of interest. These jobs should not be so time-consuming as to deter the student from fully pursuing his/her educational objectives.

J. Graduate students have a right to workers' compensation for job-related illness or injury.

K. Graduate students have a right to employment security for the duration of a particular job assignment.

L. Graduate students have a right to appropriate workspace, sufficient technological resources and adequate clerical staff and supplies.

VIII. Catch All Phrase:

A. Graduate students reserve those rights not specifically enumerated in this document, but otherwise specified by the university, the academic community, or the nation.